

**Canyonlands National Park**  
**Day Use Permit Questions and Answers**

**1. What is the justification for implementing day use permits and associated limits on White Rim Road and Elephant Hill Road?**

The Canyonlands National Park Backcountry Management Plan provides for protection and preservation of the one of the last relatively undisturbed areas of the Colorado Plateau, providing visitors with an outstanding experience of solitude. Its development was necessary to address significant increase in visitation to the area. While the plan addresses overnight use in the backcountry, day use was reserved for future management. With continued significant increasing visitation to southeast Utah, including the national parks, it is crucial that the NPS is proactive in preserving this experience for all visitors to the park's backcountry. The day use permits are simply a means by which to ensure this fundamental experience is protected and preserved for future generations. In addition, the Foundation Document for Canyonlands National Park provides significance statements which describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park. The assemblage of roads which provide access to the backcountry of Canyonlands National Park and the exceptional recreational experience they provide are highlighted in these statements. The park is identified as primarily a backcountry park with limited accessibility. The remote wildness and solitude of the backcountry is a fundamental resource that warrants primary consideration; it is critical to achieving the park's purpose and maintaining its significance. This exceptional recreational experience is exemplified by the enhanced opportunities to experience remoteness in solitude; a special and unique experience which must be protected and preserved for current and future visitors.

**2. What is the current visitation to the White Rim Road and Elephant Hill Road?**

No reliable data on visitation to the White Rim and Elephant Hill Roads is available. The NPS currently collects and has collected for over 10 years use statistics from traffic counters and overnight permits on these roads. Day use visitation levels can only be estimated from these

statistics. However, this information provides a relatively small picture, in the form of a number, of the overall atmosphere on these roads. The NPS is responsible for protecting and preserving the overall exceptional experience highlighted in the Canyonlands National Park Backcountry Management Plan and the park Foundation Document.

Data collected from traffic counters on the west and east sides of the White Rim Road demonstrates that the peak months of use are March, April, May, September, and October. Over the last ten years (2004-2014) on the east side of the White Rim an average of 40 vehicles per day passed a traffic counter (two-way travel and overnight vehicles are included in this number). In 2014, during these months, there was a max of 58 vehicle counts on a single day (two-way travel and overnight vehicles are included in this number). On the West Side an average of 26 vehicles per day passed a traffic counter (two-way travel and overnight vehicles are included in this number). In 2011 a trial period of day use permits on the White Rim Road between March and May had a max number of permits issued on one day of 30 (May 29, 2011). Each permit included up to 3 vehicles and 15 bicycles. There was an average of 3.2 bicycles and 1.4 vehicles per permit. Taking into consideration two way travel and overnight vehicle counts, it is anticipated that a limit of 50 day use vehicles allowed per day would maintain the current levels with a low potential of reaching the limit on busier days of the year. This limit does not include vehicles with overnight permits.

Traffic counter data on Elephant Hill demonstrates that the peak months of use are March, April, May, September, and October. Over the last four years (2010-2013) an average of 12 vehicles per day accessed the road during these months. In 2013, during these months, there was a high of 44 vehicles on one day (May) and the median number of vehicles per day was 19. This includes both overnight and day use. A limit of 24 day use vehicles per day would maintain the current levels with a low potential of reaching the limit on busier days of the year. This limit does not include vehicles with overnight permits.

### **3. Will overnight campers need to get a day use permit?**

No. An overnight backcountry permit is the only permit backcountry campers need. Backcountry permits issued do not count towards the limit on day use permits.

**4. How will day use permits effect how the road is maintained?**

These roads are already maintained to a 4 wheel drive standards as outlined in the park road maintenance plan (road maintained to a 20ft wide single lane or narrow two lanes; may be crowned or sloped to prevent ponding; protrusions are to be maintained to 6” due to rutting, washouts and rock protrusions via mounding dirt or piling of rocks; grade surface with native material, pull ditches, and maintain drainage structures). The conditions of the road fluctuate throughout the year with weather related occurrences, erosion, and routine, standard maintenance.

**5. How will permits be made available for the public to obtain?**

Permits will be available online through the park website beginning 24 hours in advance of the trip date. An allotted number of permits for each day will also be available at the district visitor centers.

Permits Available Each Day	Online (24 hours in advance)	Visitor Center (day of trip)
<b>White Rim Road</b>		
Vehicle Permits (including motorcycles)	25	25
Bicycle Permits	25	25
<b>Elephant Hill Road</b>		
Vehicle Permits (including motorcycles)	12	12
Bicycle Permits	12	any permits not issued online

**6. What is the justification for group size limits?**

The established group size limits are comparable to the group size limits for overnight users in the Canyonlands National Park Backcountry Management Plan. Group sizes of 3 vehicles (including motorcycles) on both the White Rim Road and Elephant Hill Road, 15 bicycles on the White Rim Road and 12 bicycles on the Elephant Hill Road provide for the desired social and recreational experiences. These limits address several issues:

- congestion at road junctions and parking areas with limited space
- impacts to natural soundscapes from large groups
- impacts from raised dust with large groups.

Larger associated groups may travel on the same day; however each group must be separated by 30 minutes of travel time.

**7. Will commercial guides be allocated permits to ensure there are enough for private users?**

Currently companies with concession permits may offer commercial vehicle and bicycle services. The number of trips they may offer on any given day is regulated through their concession permits. These trips are not deducted from the day use permits allotted for the public.

**8. Requiring a day use permit will negatively affect my experience prior to coming to Canyonlands National Park. Why is the NPS creating another level of management for an area that does not have a problem?**

Visitation to southeast Utah, including the national parks, continues to increase yearly; most dramatically in recent years. The NPS has a goal to provide a unique experience in its backcountry; an experience which may not exist in other areas. These day use permits allow the park to be proactive in managing and maintaining levels of visitation, ultimately assuring visitors will have a high quality, enjoyable experience during their trip in the park for years to come. Permits will conveniently be available online and can be obtained prior to coming to the park or

while at the visitor centers up to 24 hours in advance. An allotted number will also be available for visitors who walk into the visitor center on the day of their trip.

**9. Were other alternatives considered in addition to the day use permit and associated limits?**

The NPS has considered requiring day use permits only during peak times of year. While this may be an option in the future, it does not currently meet an underlying goal of obtaining data on the level of day use throughout the year. Data collected from the day use permits and overnight permits along with traffic counter data will provide for more accurate information on use trends.

**10. What are the fees associated with the day use permit?**

There are no fees for the day use permits during the initial year. The park entrance fee is required as it was prior to the day use permit. A reservation fee may be implemented for online permits in the future to help offset costs and deter permits from going unused.

**11. I already pay an entrance fee; do I have to get a day use permit too?**

Yes. These are special areas that require an additional level of management to maintain exceptional recreational experiences. There are no additional fees for the day use permit during the initial year.

**12. If I travel through Beef Basin to go through Canyonlands, do I need to get a day use permit?**

Yes. Each vehicle, motorcycle, and/or bicycle must obtain a day use permit. You can conveniently obtain a permit and pay your park entrance fee online up to 24 hours in advance of your trip. You may also obtain your permit from the Needles District Visitor Center, during normal operating hours, up to 24 hours in advance or on the day of your trip.

**13. If I am a self-sustained bicyclist and intend to complete the White Rim in one day do I need to get a day use permit?**

Yes. Each individual bicyclist must obtain a day use permit. You can conveniently obtain a permit and pay your park entrance fee online up to 24 hours in advance of your trip. You may also obtain your permit from the Island in the Sky District Visitor Center, during normal operating hours, up to 24 hours in advance or on the day of your trip.

**14. If I am traveling to Taylor Canyon via the White Rim Road do I need to get a day use permit?**

Yes. Each vehicle, motorcycle, and/or bicycle must obtain a day use permit. You can conveniently obtain a permit and pay your park entrance fee online up to 24 hours in advance of your trip. You may also obtain your permit from the Island in the Sky District Visitor Center, during normal operating hours, up to 24 hours in advance or on the day of your trip.